



PHOTO BY JIM ROBERTSON

Shelter from the Storm

Alexandria Police Officer Natalie Selby

ABBIE DARST | PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Officer Natalie Selby, at only 35, has already experienced and contributed more in her personal life and professional career than many do in a lifetime. Selby says she has “grown up in law enforcement,” and her drive to begin programs such as an Explorers Post, Rape Aggression Defense classes and a northern Kentucky Crisis Intervention Team training group demonstrate how instrumental she’s been to the success of the Alexandria Police Department. Selby began her career at the Northern Kentucky University Police Department, and has served in Alexandria for nearly 11 years. Newly married to T.J. Selby of the Erlanger Police Department, the two find problem-solving inspiration as they share stories and issues encountered in their law enforcement positions.

When I was in eighth grade, I remember filling out a questionnaire, called Career Passport. I had to answer questions on a Scantron sheet. They ran it through a machine and it came out with different job options. I was going through and I saw something about law enforcement and thought, “That’d be pretty interesting.”

Once I got into law enforcement, I started realizing I was taking calls where it seemed like there was something wrong with people. It’s one of those things where you do the best you can, but you don’t know what to do. But I felt myself really being drawn to these people because I felt so bad for them. Then, in 2004, I found out my sister, Nancy, was diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenic and bi-polar and I was like, “My gosh, what are we going to do?”

In 2009, I went through the Crisis Intervention Team training, or CIT, and it really jumpstarted me back into police work, so to speak. I learned a lot about mental-health issues and medications. It was not just helping me professionally, but personally too, because my mom and dad and my sisters, Nancy and Sarah, have all dealt with various mental-health issues.

The whole team that taught us CIT are my mentors. When Louisville Metro Sgt. Pam Oberhausen, a female sergeant who works at a huge police department, stood in front of the class and said she has several

mental illnesses herself, I almost hit the floor. I couldn’t believe she was saying that. It gives me cold chills thinking about it. Because I, myself, having so many family members with mental-health issues, wasn’t going to scrape by. I deal with depression and anxiety — I take medication every day for it.

After a CIT course, people feel more comfortable talking about things going on in their family. Everybody has skeletons in their closet; everybody has things they don’t want to talk about. It is good to be positive and not dwell on negative things in your life. You’ve got to push forward and keep going one day at a time. It’s about changing the way you think.

CIT really helps me relate to people more, and it helps them see me as a human being instead of the mean, nasty police officer who took them to jail three to four weeks ago, or a year ago and thinking they’re going to get the same treatment again. That’s one reason I love working in Alexandria because we are a very, very community-oriented police department.

As police officers, we experience a lot of the same things that people on the street deal with. We’re no different than they are. We all have financial problems. We all have relationship problems. But we have the uniform on, and that makes people view us differently.

We operate with the Kentucky Data Interoperability system. They made a special spot for me in KDI where I can file information on anyone I’m working with in CIT. Sometimes people suffering from mental health issues, not all, but some, can get violent and cause trouble. I started thinking from a hostage negotiator’s standpoint. Wouldn’t it be nice for me to keep track of all the people I’m working with? So, I decided when I met different people, I was going to sit and talk with

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them and get as much information as I could about their family, medications and who to contact in case of emergency.

One particular person I work with, as a CIT officer, only has one family member that will have anything to do with her. That one person takes her to the grocery store on Fridays and brings her back. She has no real life. She’s one of my special people because a lot of people I work with who have mental-health issues have family members to help. But this lady doesn’t have anybody. I knew I had to do something. To me, it’s always better to do something than doing nothing.

I teach the Rape Aggression Defense classes — I’m really passionate about them. For the longest time it was just me teaching and I’d find other instructors to help. Amy Schworer, who now works at Erlanger Police Department, quickly became my mentor. We now have six people certified to teach. I’m the program coordinator and teach classes as well.

For my very first class, I snatched every woman who worked in the office and got them involved. There has only been one time we’ve advertised the RAD class in the paper. We had so many people sign up I had to call in reinforcements.

I was a police explorer. I really enjoyed being a police explorer. The experience was great, so I wanted to run the Alexandria post right when I first started the program.

Explorers start at age 14. We set the kids up for an interview using a packet we would use to hire officers. We conduct a background check; we check with their school to see behavior reports. I would say, since 2007, maybe 30 kids have gone through our Explorer program. 🐾

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